

Annual State Goals and Reports of Progress

Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

Progress in Accomplishing Strategies and Goals

This attachment of the State Plan provides a summary of accomplishments in completing the Strategies and Goals as identified in Attachments 4.12(c)(1) and 4.12(d). The following is a summary of the

- ✓ goals achieved;
- ✓ strategies that contributed to achieving the goals; and
- ✓ an explanation of the factors that impeded the achievement of goals.

Goal 1: Improve earnings, benefits and career advancement for consumers served by SBVI.

The average annual wage for individuals rehabilitated during FFY 2005 was \$18,933 with an average hourly rate of \$10.08 an hour at 34 average hours worked per week. The average annual wage of individuals rehabilitated in FFY 2004 was \$18,800. A renewed emphasis has been put on assisting consumers to obtain quality occupations whenever possible. Strategies that continue to contribute to the high level of wages reported by SBVI include:

- ✓ Division's continuing emphasis on promoting higher wages for consumers.
- ✓ Providing financial incentives to providers who help consumers receive higher wages.
- ✓ District offices are working more closely with local economic development to access potential employers.
- ✓ Acknowledging staff whose average hourly wage of successful closures is exemplary.
- ✓ A focus on obtaining full time employment with benefits for individuals who are on SSI or SSDI.

Goal 2: Partnerships created between the Division and the local business community.

District office staff participate in organizations representing local business and industry in communities around the state. In addition, all SBVI staff participate in a variety of activities to promote partnerships between vocational rehabilitation and employers in their communities. Examples of activities during the past year include:

- ✓ Information Dissemination at the State Optometric Association Convention
- ✓ Presentation to Local Service Organizations (i.e. Lion's Clubs, Masons, Kiwanis)
- ✓ Outreach activities in conjunction with National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October
- ✓ Participation in Employer Recognition Activities
- ✓ Local Workforce Development Committees
- ✓ Chamber of Commerce Committees
- ✓ Job Fairs
- ✓ Health Fairs
- ✓ Employer Forums
- ✓ White Cane Awareness Day Activities
- ✓ Local Mayor's Committees

Goal 3: Provide Individuals with severe and persistent mental illness, traumatic brain injuries, deaf/blindness, and significant multiple disabilities specialized services so they can fully access the benefits of vocational rehabilitation services.

Due to the issues to be addressed when coordinating and delivering services for individuals who are blind with a traumatic brain injury, specialized training continues to be provided. This specialized training assists staff in addressing not only sensory deficits but cognitive training needs of those served.

Services for individuals with dual sensory loss (deaf/blindness) are accessed through cooperation of the University of SD Center for Disabilities, CSD and other entities serving individuals with dual sensory loss. The expertise of the Deaf/Blind Specialist allows consumers of SBVI with dual sensory loss the opportunity to receive specialized services that assist them to become employed and live independently. The deaf-blind specialist serves as a consultant to address issues with SBVI staff and meets with consumers as needed. CSD provides training and services specifically related to hearing loss.

Specialists in the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired provide unique services not available elsewhere in the state. A diabetic education specialist provides training in non-sighted techniques for diabetes management for individuals who cannot utilize traditional techniques due to vision loss. The low vision specialist provides evaluation and training to individuals with residual vision in both the independent living and vocational programs. Job site analysis conducted by the low vision specialist assists consumers and employers with accommodations on the job. A certified orientation and mobility specialist provides evaluation and training in mobility techniques. The services delivered by SBVI specialists are critical for assuring successful outcomes for individuals with multiple disabilities.

In cooperation with the Divisions of Mental Health and Rehabilitation Services, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has made significant progress in accessing methods to better serve individuals with severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI). Performance contracts with mental health centers promote the use of supported employment services, supported educational services and transitional employment. This has led to a team approach between local offices and the mental health centers leading to coordinated long-term supports allowing individuals to have greater access to vocational rehabilitation services.

Goal 4: Consumers will make good decisions about their vocational future.

Initiatives have been implemented to prepare and guide students with disabilities who choose to attend post-secondary education programs. The Division has participated in initiatives of the Transition Liaison Project such as "Youth Leadership Forum" and "Catch the Wave". These programs offer information, resources and support to assist consumers in making good decisions about their vocational futures.

The Division is continually seeking new methods of assisting consumers in making informed decisions in relation to their vocational services and goals. Division programs and services are found on the SBVI Home Page. Consumers and agencies are accessing this web-based resource on a regular basis. A consumer information packet assists consumers with information on resources available to them and includes provider choices, descriptions of services, information on consumer organizations and other information relevant to making informed choices throughout the rehabilitation process.

A cooperative agreement between the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division supports a transition specialist who works with transition aged students with vision loss. The transition specialist meets with students and IEP teams on a state wide basis to assist with planning for post secondary and vocational transition. Transition services are also provided to high school students through week long training and career exploration activities at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind each summer. Activities include tours of businesses and post secondary institutions, employer interviews, skills of blindness training, a business leadership luncheon, and recreational activities for students with vision loss from across South Dakota.

Federal Program Evaluation Standards

In accordance with the provisions of the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act the Division monitors program standards to ensure compliance with federal standards and quality of services.

Standard 1: Employment Outcomes

Standard 1 requires an agency to assist eligible individuals with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, to obtain, maintain, or regain high quality employment outcomes. The quality of an employment outcome is based on whether the outcome is consistent with the individual's vocational choices; is in competitive, self-employment, or BEP employment; maintains or increases the individual's earnings; and offers medical insurance plans covering hospitalization. The following performance indicators measure minimum compliance with this standard.

- 1.1 Compare the total numbers of individuals obtaining an employment outcome during the current and previous performance periods.
- 1.2 Measure the number of persons obtaining an employment outcome as a percentage of all persons exiting the program after receiving VR services.
- 1.3 Measure the number of persons obtaining a competitive, self-employment, or BEP employment outcome as a percentage of all persons obtaining any type of employment outcome. **Primary Indicator**
- 1.4 Measure the percentage of competitively employed individuals who have significant disabilities. **Primary Indicator**

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- 1.5 Measure the average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-employment, or BEP employment with earning levels equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to the State's average hourly earnings for all individuals in the State who are employed.

Primary Indicator

- 1.6 Measure the difference between the percentage of individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-employment, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage who report their own income as their largest single source of economic support and the percentage of individuals in that employment who reported their own income as their largest single source of support at the time they applied for VR services.

Standard 2: Equal Access to Services

Standard 2 requires an agency to measure equality of access to rehabilitation services. Fewer than 100 individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds exited SBVI's program in FFY 2005. Statistical reliability is not possible with the limited numbers exiting the system. In accordance with 34 CFR 361.84 (C)(2)(iii), the agency's policies ensuring equal access for all individuals with disabilities assure equal access to services for individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds.

Assessment of the State VR Agency in meeting the Performance Standards and Indicators

Utilizing the FFY 2005 data, the Division has assessed their performance in meeting the minimum requirements for Standard 1. The following chart displays the outcome of this assessment.

Standard/Indicator	Minimum Requirement	SBVI Outcomes	Indicator Met?
Standard 1: Employment Outcomes	4 of the 6 Indicators and 2 of the 3 Primary Indicators	6 of the 6 Indicators and all 3 Primary Indicators	Yes
Indicator 1.1	70.5	87	Yes
Indicator 1.2	69.8%	71.90%	Yes
Indicator 1.3	35.4%	98.85%	Yes
Indicator 1.4	89%	96.39%	Yes
Indicator 1.5	\$6.71	\$10.01	Yes
Indicator 1.6	30.4%	31.33%	Yes

The following chart gives a historical view of outcomes in SBVI including percentage of competitive employment outcomes.

FFY	% Competitive Employment	Successful Closures
1997	89%	81
1998	90%	86
1999	90%	101
2000	96%	92
2001	98%	90
2002	93%	74
2003	94%	65
2004	95%	76
2005	97%	87

Utilization of Innovation and Expansion Funds – SBVI

The Rehabilitation Act requires that a portion of funds be reserved for innovation and expansion activities. The Division of SBVI works with the Board to prioritize these activities. The Board of SBVI utilizes the Division senior secretary for support of Board activities due to the limited resources available for personnel. Activities supported by the Board of SBVI in SFY2006 were as follows:

- Costs associated w/ Board Member attendance at quarterly meetings
- Public Meeting Promotion and Facilitation
- Consumer Satisfaction Surveys
- Stipends to Consumers to attend the State Native American Summit
- Statewide Needs Assessment
- National Disability Employment Awareness Month Activities
- Workshop registration and travel expenses for Board Members attendance at agency training, RSA sponsored training and consumer conventions.
- Workshop registration and travel expenses for consumers' attendance at state conventions of consumer organizations.

Board members participate in prioritizing innovation and expansion activities which impact citizens who are blind or visually impaired. Board members provided guidance on questions and implementation of the consumer satisfaction surveys and the statewide needs assessments. Costs associated with each of the activities are allocated to program budgets that are appropriate for the specific activity.

State Unified Plan

The "Corrective Action" section of the State Unified Plan requires partner agencies to describe corrective action that will be taken if performance falls short of expectations. The Rehabilitation Act provides remedies and plans for state agencies that do not achieve required performance standards. State Plan Attachment 4.12(e) addresses Unified Plan requirements in their entirety. This attachment clearly demonstrates:

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- 1) The public vocational rehabilitation program's description of achievements for all program goals and describes strategies on how goals are being achieved.
 - 2) All goals are being achieved and there is no need to describe inhibitive factors.
 - 3) The public vocational rehabilitation program for the blind in South Dakota meets all standards pursuant to performance standards in the Rehabilitation Act.
 - 4) As evidenced in the Attachment 4.2c and in the SRC report to the Governor, there is an evaluation of progress made in improving the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program from the prior year.

The public vocational rehabilitation program is represented on a state Workforce Investment Act (WIA) workgroup that deals with data collection systems and establishing program performance measures as per federal requirements. This representative brings performance measures between programs to a level of understanding. Performance outcomes of the vocational rehabilitation program are summarized for and addressed with the Workforce Development Council as well as the state rehabilitation councils.